

Ten ways to reduce waste when you shop.

Most Products and packaging not only use up limited natural resources, they also take up land fill space when tossed out. So By shopping smart to reduce waste, you'll conserve resources and turn an ordinary shopping car into an environmental protective device.

Just follow the tips below. And call 1-800-RECYCLE for more information.

#1 Think Ahead.

Thinking ahead before you shop is one of the best ways to reduce waste.

Start by making a shopping list and following it as if your planet's life depends on it. The reason is simple: when you use a shopping list, you won't buy products you don't need.

In fact, whenever you shop, ask yourself, "do I really need it?" If you don't, don't buy it. Unneeded products just end up in the garbage.

Another think-ahead tip: don't go to your store empty-handed. Take as many durable shopping bags as you need. Or, reuse any paper or plastic shopping bags you have at home. Keep your bags in your car so you don't forget them.

Also bring reusable containers and clean, dry bags to hold bulk food items like produce and dry goods - that way you won't have to use your store's bags.

#2. Buy durables & Avoid Disposables.

Disposable products are only convenient a short time: they soon take up ever-shrinking landfill space and waste precious resources.

Disposable diapers may do even more damage by spreading disease. So switch to durable cloth diapers; you'll save trees and save money, too. Simply launder them yourself or use a service.

Try to avoid throwaway plates, cups and utensils. For any picnic or party, your durables at home work just fine for a lot less money.

And instead of buying paper towels and coffee filters, stick to durable cloth towels and a metal or cloth coffee filter. While you're at it, switch to reusable lunch boxes, Thermos bottles and reclosable sandwich containers instead of sandwich bags.

#3. Switch to durable shopping bags.


The next time you're asked "paper or plastic?", be good to the environment. Say "neither," and use a durable shopping bag instead. Canvas and nylon bags are available at most grocery stores. Your store may even give you a discount for using them.

#4. Look for recycled products and packaging.

Nothing recyclable is really conserved until it's been used once, recycled, then used again. So to close the recycling loop, buy recycled products and products with recycled packaging.

Look for the recycled content symbol and label information when you shop. Also, cardboard that's grey on the inside is made with recycled material. So are most glass jars, tin and aluminum cans. You'll also find recycled paper products, including toilet paper and notecards, in many stores.

Let's give earth's resources a second chance.

Made with recycled materials 

#5 Buy recyclable Products

Recyclable products can potentially be recycled and reused. So before you shop, find out what can be recycled in your area, then choose that kind of packaging and recycle it. In most areas, you can recycle glass, tin, aluminum and newspapers.

In some areas, certain plastics are also recyclable. Call 1-800 RECYCLE to find out exactly what's recyclable where you live.

Recycle this package.

#6 Choose products with the least packaging.

By cutting down on the amount of packaging you buy, you'll contribute less waste to landfills and save money, too.

First, always buy the largest size you can use since it likely has the least packaging. a good example is yogurt. A one gallon yogurt container leaves you with a lot less trash than 16 single-serving yogurt cups and lids. (*One important exception: when buy a household hazardous chemical product, buy the smallest size you need.*)

Second, when you have a choice between different forms of the same product, choose the form with the least packaging. Juice is a good example. A two-quart frozen concentrate container has much less packaging than 8 single-serving juice boxes.

#7. Switch to package-free foods.

Most fresh produce and bulk-bin foods have absolutely no packaging. It's good food, good for you, good for the environment, and costs less than packaged food.

Want to do more? Bring your own reusable containers to hold bulk foods and you won't have to use disposable bags. Or, you can wash out used plastic bags at home. When they're dry, keep them in your durable shopping bag so they're always handy.

Be a bulk food buyer. After all, you can't eat packaging anyway.

#8. Shop to reduce toxic waste.

Before you purchase any household hazardous chemical product--that's anything with a caution, warning, poison or danger label--ask yourself if you really need it. After all, there's probably a safer and cheaper way to do the job that won't hurt the planet.

But, if you decide you absolutely need a toxic product, only buy the exact amount necessary. No more. And be sure to follow the label directions carefully.

When it comes to all those designer cleaners on the market, you can skip them all. Use simple soap and water. Also, baking soda, vinegar and good old-fashioned elbow grease will clean just about anything without harming you or the environment.

To get rid of pests, trust a fly swatter, fly paper and a vacuum cleaner. Just keeping your home clean is usually the best way to control pests.

To learn more about safe alternatives to household hazardous chemicals as well as their disposal, call 1-800 RECYCLE. We'll send you our free booklet, *Turning the Tide on Toxics in the Home*.

#9. Help kids become waste-busters.

Teach kids how they can help reduce waste, and they'll get into smart shopping habits that will last a lifetime.

School lunches are a great place to start. You can help kids learn to avoid the single-serving trap: mini-puddings, mini-applesauces and juice boxes. Instead, aim for sandwiches, chips, drinks and desserts in reusable containers.

Above all, teach kids to care about the earth.

#10. Encourage your grocer to help.

Your grocer can help make smart shopping easier. Ask him or her to do the following.

- Stock durable shopping bags and offer paper bag rebates.
- Offer environment-safe product alternatives.
- Stock recycled products and packaging.
- Stop prepackaging produce.
- Introduce a bulk-buying section for cereals, grains, pasta and other dry products.
- Identify items that are good for the environment.
- Provide a space for information on shopping for the environment.